BILLING CODE 3510-22-P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 679

[Docket No. 130925836-4174-02]

RIN 0648-XD566

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Pacific Cod by Trawl Catcher

Vessels in the Central Regulatory Area of the Gulf of Alaska

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and

Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Temporary rule; closure.

SUMMARY: NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for Pacific cod by catcher vessels

using trawl gear in the Central Regulatory Area of the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). This

action is necessary to prevent exceeding the 2014 Pacific cod total allowable catch (TAC)

apportioned to trawl catcher vessels in the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA.

DATES: Effective 1200 hours, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), October 17, 2014, through

2400 hours, A.l.t., December 31, 2014.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Obren Davis, 907-586-7228.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: NMFS manages the groundfish fishery in the

GOA exclusive economic zone according to the Fishery Management Plan for

Groundfish of the Gulf of Alaska (FMP) prepared by the North Pacific Fishery

Management Council under authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation

and Management Act. Regulations governing fishing by U.S. vessels in accordance with

the FMP appear at subpart H of 50 CFR part 600 and 50 CFR part 679. Regulations governing sideboard protections for GOA groundfish fisheries appear at subpart B of 50 CFR part 680.

The 2014 Pacific cod TAC apportioned to trawl catcher vessels in the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA is 16,230 metric tons (mt), as established by the final 2014 and 2015 harvest specifications for groundfish of the GOA (79 FR 12890, March 6, 2014).

In accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(i), the Administrator, Alaska Region, NMFS (Regional Administrator) has determined that the 2014 Pacific cod TAC apportioned to trawl catcher vessels in the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA will soon be reached. Therefore, the Regional Administrator is establishing a directed fishing allowance of 15,230 mt and is setting aside the remaining 1,000 mt as bycatch to support other anticipated groundfish fisheries. In accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(iii), the Regional Administrator finds that this directed fishing allowance has been reached. Consequently, NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for Pacific cod by catcher vessels using trawl gear in the Central Regulatory Area of the GOA. After the effective date of this closure the maximum retainable amounts at § 679.20(e) and (f) apply at any time during a trip.

Classification

This action responds to the best available information recently obtained from the fishery. The Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, NOAA (AA), finds good cause to waive the requirement to provide prior notice and opportunity for public comment pursuant to the authority set forth at 5 U.S.C. 553(b)(B) as such requirement is impracticable and contrary to the public interest. This requirement is impracticable and

contrary to the public interest as it would prevent NMFS from responding to the most

recent fisheries data in a timely fashion and would delay the directed fishing closure of

Pacific cod by catcher vessels using trawl gear in the Central Regulatory Area of the

GOA. NMFS was unable to publish a notice providing time for public comment because

the most recent, relevant data only became available as of October 16, 2014.

The AA also finds good cause to waive the 30-day delay in the effective date of

this action under 5 U.S.C. 553(d)(3). This finding is based upon the reasons provided

above for waiver of prior notice and opportunity for public comment.

This action is required by § 679.20 and is exempt from review under Executive

Order 12866.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1801 et seq.

Dated: October 17, 2014.

_____

Alan D. Risenhoover,

Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries,

National Marine Fisheries Service.

[FR Doc. 2014-25103 Filed 10/17/2014 at 4:15 pm; Publication Date: 10/22/2014]